28th Annual Wildflower Weekend: May 3-4, 2014 Program Schedule

Saturday, May 3

Spring Birds

8:30 to 11 a.m.

Wood thrushes, warblers and other birds are often attracted to the springs and forest here. Mostly gentle with some short, very steep places. ½-mile loop. Meet at Gravel Springs Gap (mile 17.6). Alan Williams, Park Ecologist

Wildflower Identification for Beginners

9 to 11:30 a.m.

Learn to tell characteristics of different plant families on this gentle hike along a short stretch of the Appalachian Trail. ½ mile. Meet at Milam Gap parking (mile 52.8)

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger

Splendid South River Falls Trail

9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Violets, trilliums and more flowers greet hikers on this trail to a viewpoint overlooking an 83-ft. waterfall. Strenuous. 3.3 miles. Elevation change: about 910 ft. Meet at trailhead in South River picnic area (mile 62.8).

Bob Pickett, Guest Naturalist

Wilderness Ramble

9:30 a.m. to noon

Meet a variety of wildflowers along the Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail on the only guided hike that will take you into designated wilderness this weekend. 2 mi. Elevation change: about 300 ft. Meet at Fishers Gap Overlook (mile 49.4).

Marjorie Prochaska, Guest Naturalist

Bugs and Blooms (repeats at 1:30 p.m.)

10 to 11 a.m. Children's program designed for ages 7-12.

Through fun-filled activities, find out how plants and insects rely on each other in the meadow. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Meet in front of Byrd Visitor Center (mile 51). Regina Cardwell, Park Ranger

Featured Program: "Wild About Shenandoah ~ From Wildflowers to Wildlife" 10 to 11:30 a.m.

An amazing variety of species depend on each other in the habitats protected by the park. Half-hour Powerpoint program followed by a short walk near the visitor center. ½ mile. Meet at Byrd Visitor Center auditorium (mile 51). Book signing opportunity from 9:30 to 10 a.m.

Ann and Rob Simpson, Guest Naturalists

*Featured Program: "Rooting Out Invasive Plants" 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Panel discussion.

Meet with state and national park biologists for an enlightening presentation about invasive plant species, why we're concerned, what we're doing about them, and how you can help. Meet at Byrd Visitor Center auditorium (mile 51).

Jake Hughes, Biological Technician, Shenandoah National Park
Kevin Heffernan, Stewardship Biologist, Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Bugs and Blooms (repeat)

1:30 to 2:30 p.m. See morning program description.

Wonders of the Mill Prong (repeats on Sunday)

1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

This trail never fails to delight wildflower enthusiasts. Look for trillium, wild geranium and perhaps a few surprises! 2 miles. Elevation change: about 400 ft. Meet at Milam Gap parking (mile 52.8). *Tom Dierauf, Guest Naturalist*

Appalachian Trail Beauties (repeats on Sunday)

1:30 to 4 p.m.

This gentle section of the AT hosts a tremendous diversity of native woodland flowers. 1.5 miles. Elevation change: about 185 ft. Meet a Lewis Mountain picnic area (mile 57.5). *Mara Meisel, Park Ranger*

Franklin Cliffs Stroll

3 to 4 p.m.

An amazing variety of wildflowers are just a few steps from your car. ½ mi. Meet at Franklin Cliffs Overlook (mile 49).

Ann and Rob Simpson, Guest Naturalists

Sunday, May 4

*Compton Peak Hike

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In addition to wildflowers, you'll see magnificent outcrop of columnar jointing, an unusual rock formation. Some rough, rocky places and a very steep section. 2.4 miles. Elevation change: about 835 ft. Meet at Compton Gap parking (mile 10.4).

Richard Stromberg, Guest Naturalist

Wonders of the Mill Prong (repeat)

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. See description of Saturday hike. *Kristin Zimet, Guest Naturalist*

Tiptoe 'Round the Trillium

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

This is usually a great trail for large-flowered trillium and wake robins, among many others. 3 miles. Elevation change: about 900 ft. Meet at Hightop Mountain parking (mile 66.7). *Mara Meisel, Park Ranger*

Lure of the Limberlost

10 to 11:30 a.m.

Search for flowers on this gentle trail through a forest that has undergone major changes in recent years. Along the way, pick up some tips for taking fantastic nature photos. 1 mile. Meet at Limberlost parking (mile 43).

Ann and Rob Simpson, Guest Naturalists

*Ft. Windham Rocks Loop

1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Discover wildflowers on this brand new hike on the Dickey Ridge Trail past an interesting rock outcrop. 2 miles. Elevation change: about 330 ft. Meet at Compton Gap parking (mile 10.4). *Richard Stromberg, Guest Naturalist*

Marvelous Millers Head

1:30 to 4 p.m.

Look for uncommon plants on a hike to an observation platform and view of the Shenandoah Valley. Rocky and steep in places, with uphill return. 1.5 miles. Elevation change: about 250 ft. Meet at Millers Head trailhead near south entrance of Skyland (mile 42.5). Park at top of hill, near amphitheater. Sue Schaefer, Guest Naturalist

Appalachian Trail Beauties (repeat)

1:30 to 4 p.m. See description of Saturday hike.

*Denotes new program this year

Length of trail listed is for entire hike. Elevation changes of less than 70 feet are not included.

Reminders

- Wear sturdy shoes and bring water on all hikes.
- Evaluate your personal fitness and health to choose an appropriate program.
- Pets are discouraged on Wildflower Weekend walks.
- Come prepared for wet weather. Walks may be conducted in light rain, but will be canceled in case of thunderstorms.
- Learn more about Shenandoah's wildflowers at the park's website: www.nps.gov/shen

More than 850 species of flowering plants are found in Shenandoah National Park. About 70% of them are native. Many native woodland wildflowers thrive in the dappled forest sunlight of springtime. They race to bloom and attract pollinators before overhead trees become fully leafed out, and shade engulfs them. Hot summer sunshine is too strong for them. Now is their time.

Please help to ensure that wildflowers will be around for generations by leaving them unharmed. A flower that is picked can miss a chance to spread thousands of seeds. A plant that is dug up is gone forever, and the loss affects all things connected to it. If you love them, leave them.

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order."

~ John Burroughs

Meet Our Volunteer Hike Leaders and Guests

Tom Dierauf is a retired forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry and is on the advisory board of the Flora of Virginia project. He has enjoyed hiking, backcountry camping, fishing and discovering wildflowers in Shenandoah for more than 40 years.

Kevin Heffernan is stewardship biologist for the Virginia Natural Heritage Program of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. He is chairman of the Virginia Invasive Species Advisory Committee, which recently completed the state invasive species management plan.

Bob Pickett retired from the U.S. Naval Academy as supervisor of the gardeners and greenhouses. He was the first naturalist for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, of which he's been a member since 1984, leading hikes, writing articles, and maintaining trails and cabins.

Marjorie Prochaska began her outdoor life as a rock climber with PATC. She is a Virginia Master Naturalist and past president of the Piedmont Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society. She volunteers in the entomology department at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

Sue Schaefer is a retired ranger at Shenandoah and a former guide and naturalist with the Delaware Nature Society. She continues her park stewardship by volunteering to remove invasive exotic plants and tending the native plant garden at Byrd Visitor Center.

Ann and **Rob Simpson** are naturalists who teach at Lord Fairfax Community College. Ann is program leader for the science department, teaching general biology, anatomy and physiology, and nature photography. Rob is professor of natural resources, teaches general and field biology, and is program head of the nature and outdoor photography curriculum. Their most recent book is the *Nature Guide to Shenandoah National Park* (2013).

Richard Stromberg is a Virginia Master Naturalist and hike leader, trail maintainer, and rare plant monitor for the PATC. He is a board member of the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS and past president of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Chapter, Master Gardeners Association.

Kristin Zimet worked as a nature guide for Clarke County Parks and Recreation and Smithsonian Journeys. She is a docent at Ice Mountain Preserve, WV, and the State Arboretum of Virginia. She is a member of the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS and is a Virginia Master Naturalist.